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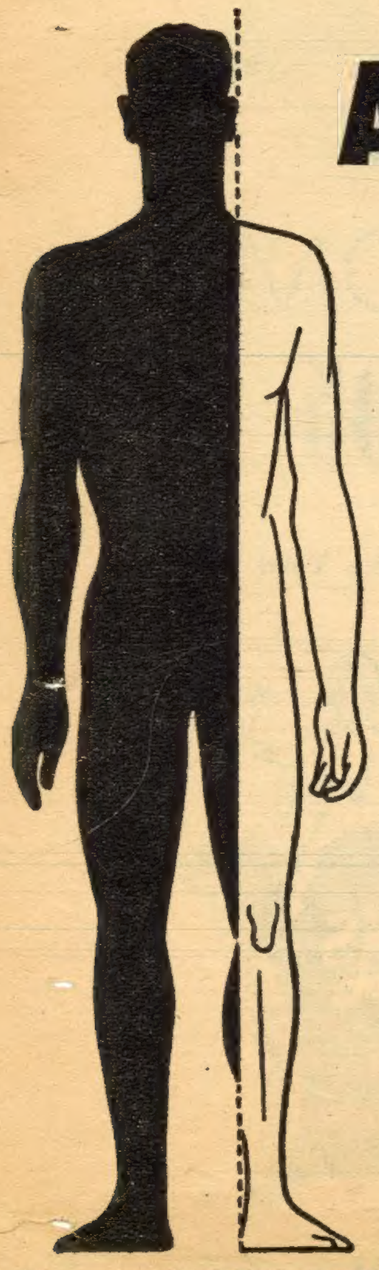

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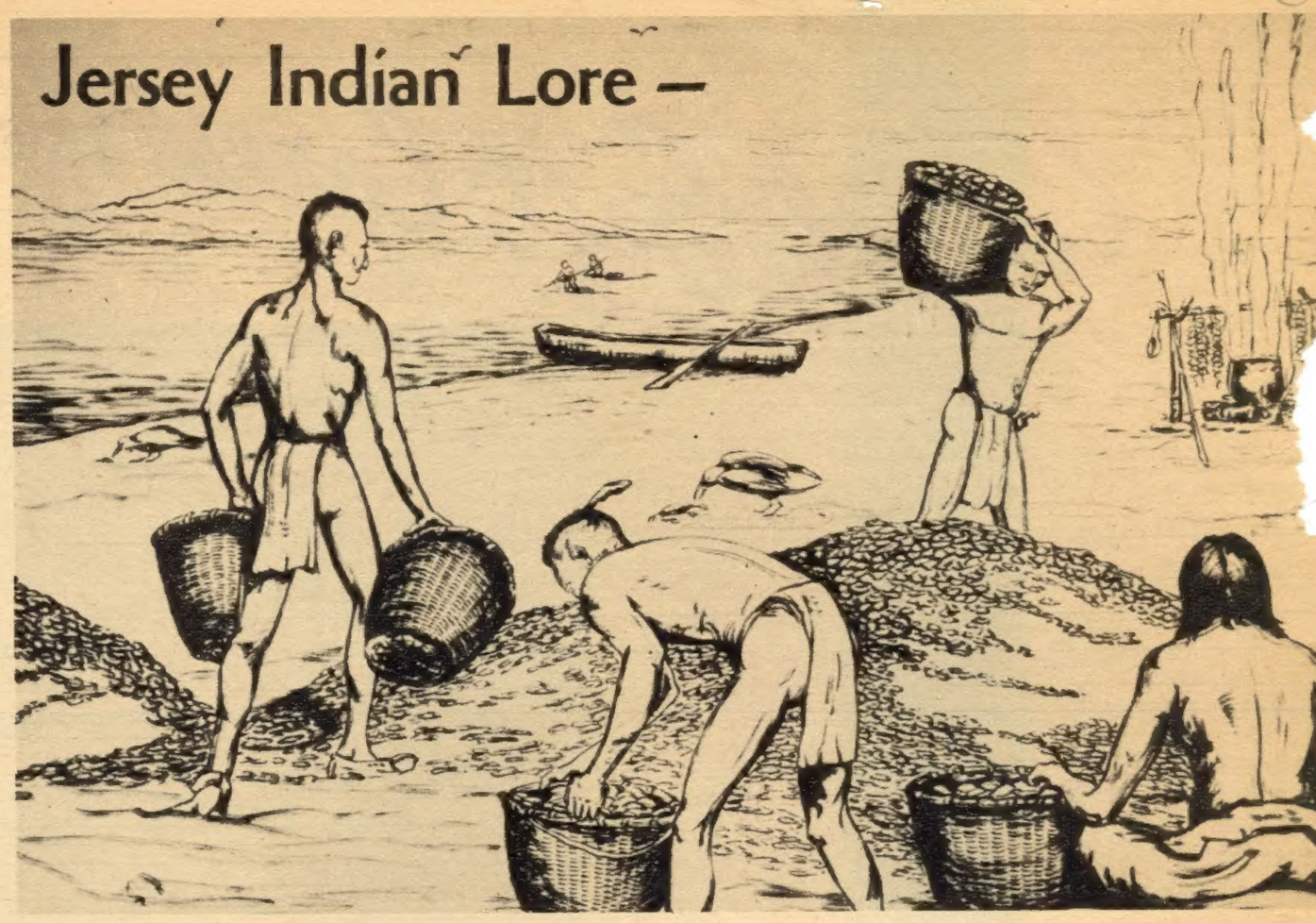

PRIMITIVE HIGHWAYS

BY CHARLES A. PHILHOWER

Statewide Network of Paths and Trails Served First Natives in Quest of Food or Adventure

MANY of New Jersey's present-day roads are old trails originally made by Indians along paths beaten through the woods and underbrush by wild animals. The Indians learned early to stalk large beasts to good watering places, shelter and food, including berries and smaller animals. They trapped or shot many wild animals and birds with bow and arrow.

Although the principal means of travel was on foot, the Jersey Indians took advantage of the state's many waterways which they traveled in canoes hacked out of huge logs. Three of these ancient dugouts have been found, the best preserved near Hackensack. This specimen can be seen in the Bergen County Historical Society rooms at the Public Library in Hackensack.

Another dugout was found by George H. Fountain of Plainfield in Red Root Creek near Bonhamtown. This stream empties into the Raritan on the north shore a mile or so above Victory Bridge. Here the Great Minisink Trail crossed the river. It is believed this particular pirogue was used to ferry the Lenape Indians across the stream to the great shell pile on the south side where thousands of shell fish feasts were held. This boat may be seen at the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark.

A third canoe was recovered by the writer from Dennis Creek, Cape May County. It is now in the State Museum at Trenton. A few other canoes have been found,

Indian hunter, wearing disguise, draws bead on game he tracked to water hole.

ABOVE: Artist's conception of scene along Delaware Bay shore when Indians visited South Jersey for seafood and wampum bead shells.

RIGHT: Map of New Jersey showing the main trails blazed by Indians for cross-state travel.

mostly in fragmentary condition. With all the small vessels of this character which must have been used by the Indians here, it is surprising how few have withstood the ravages of time.

A PLOTTING of the old Jersey Indian trails shows a veritable network. Village sites, camp sites, rock shelters, river valleys, tide water, hunting grounds, fishing spots on rivers, lakes and the coast, all figured in the courses and termini of trails. But the question arises, how were they originally established? The answer is found in a study of the animal life here in primitive times. Most animals have fixed lines of travel such as the deer, fox and bear, but the quadruped of this character that attracted the Indian most was the elk, called "mos" in Lenape.

Elks were plentiful in the early days and were a great source of food for primitive man. They were, in fact, so common that their lanes became a network of travel. Where the elk could go with relative ease, so could man. The goal may have been grazing lands of broad extent, a lively spring matted about with aquatic plants, a gap through the mountain, a way around the rocks, marshes or hills, a ford across a stream or river, a pine or hemlock grove for shelter or a level, sunny place at the base of a rocky cliff of the mountain where these large antlered beasts would congregate in groups.

In trailing the elk the Indians acquired knowledge of practical routes to travel. In this way the trails of primitive man were determined generally throughout the state. Of course, shells and shellfish, wild plums, persimmons, berries, nuts, the cactus, Indian fig, water chinquipin and war paths also were potent factors in trail fixing. Early explorers and the missionary circuit riders traversed these lanes on horseback. The covered wagons and ox carts of the pioneers jostled over the roads built on their courses; stage routes followed their tracks and, in turn, canals, railroads and auto pavements were built in their direction.

The "Falls" area at Trenton, known in the middle 17th Century by the Dutch as Kildorpy (little village on the kill), received many small parties of sojourning Indians especially in the early Springtime on their way to the southward. Some would cross over the Delaware River and go down into the Chesapeake Peninsula, others would take the trail on the east side of the river to the shell banks along and down on the cape. This path went by way of Burlington and Camden to Woodbury, where there was a division.

ONE trail ran overland to Millville and then east of the Maurice River to Cape May. Indians choosing this route had good hunting as they proceeded on their way. Others would follow the river from Salem to Bridgeton and then down the bay, often terminating their journey when good beds of oysters or clams were located, such as the beds off Bivalve and Fortesque. Hundreds of shell heaps, some covering acres and many feet in depth, both on the shore and inland, have been found to attest the fact that over a long period of time man traveled to South Jersey for seafood and shells for wampum beads.

The Indians would return north with backloads of dried and smoked oysters and clams, together with quantities of shell beads made during the Summer. Sacks of fish caught, dried and smoked were brought back with them to augment their food supply for Winter. Those coming up the coast would pass through what are now known as Tuckahoe, May's Landing, Green Bank, Tuckerton, Toms River, Squankum, Matawan and South Amboy.

There were many fishing stations along the coast, such as Leed's Point, Toms River, Point Pleasant and Sandy Hook. Some trails are found to run directly across the

(Continued on Following Page)

This is the fourth in a series of articles about the Indians who once populated this state, written especially for The Newark Sunday News Magazine by Charles A. Philhower, authority on Indian lore. In subsequent articles Mr. Philhower will tell how the Lenni Lenape tribes lived, stalked game and cultivated food. He also will reveal their struggles with the white man and explain how their relics interpret Indian culture.

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INDIAN TRAILS

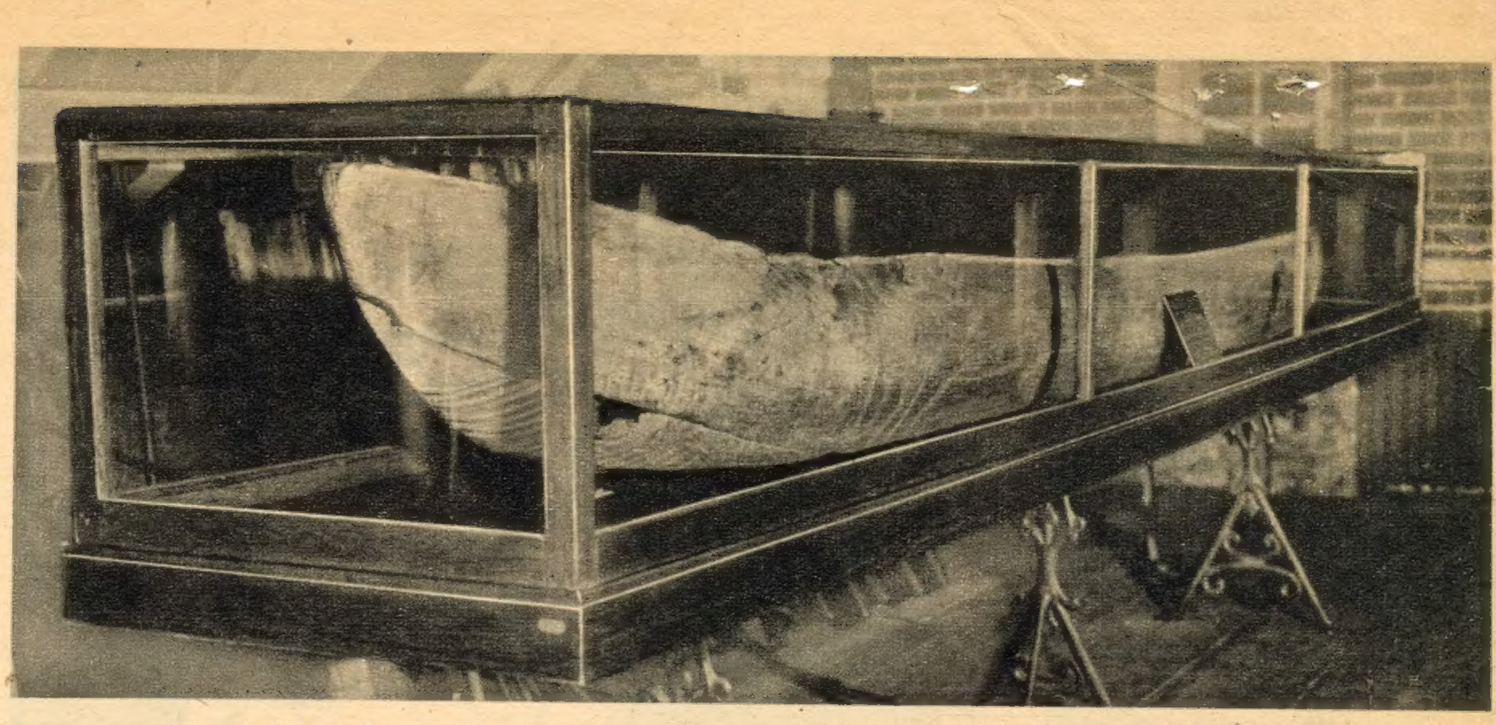
(Cont'd from Preceding Page)
state to the shore. One path often referred to was the "Long - a - Coming Trail" (Lonaconing) from Camden through Hammonton, Egg Harbor City to Absecon. It was over this route that the great squaw Chief Bathsheba Moolis would take her people from the Medford area to Brigantine Beach to gather gulls' eggs in baskets known as the "gull's nest."

At the Raritan some Indians would turn off to the mountains by way of the Great Minisink Trail. However, many kept to the path through the future sites of Elizabethtown, Newark and Rutherford to the Palisades on the Hudson.

A popular Indian stopping place on the Palisades was the renowned Mechkentiwoom, located by Hendrickson in his Carte Figurative of 1614. This name in Indian means "the great dance floor" or "the canticoing place." Here from long distances Indians of various tribes would assemble around great bonfires for festival dances, such as the first fruits sacrifice, the wedding dance, the devil dance and the death dance.

FROM Newark a trail passed up the east side of the Passaic by Paterson through Glen Rock, by way of Ramsey, through the Showangunk Gap at Suffern. Indians traveling over this path would stop at the spring by the great glacial boulder in Glen Rock. This spring was known as Essenmaykapulig, "where clear water bubbles from under the rock." The rock, which is about the size of an ordinary house, is one of the outstanding glacial erratics on this continent.

An important trail crossed over the Achter Kull to Woodbridge and thence to New Brunswick. From this place, the Upper Path went by way of Rocky Hill and Princeton to Trenton. The Lower Path went by way of Milltown, Hightstown and Bordentown to Burlington. This lower route was known as the Burlington Path. Sluyter and Dankers, the Dutch missionaries, traveled over the Upper Path in 1679 after spending a night at Piscataway near Highland Park, the last English village in New Jersey. This was on the north side of the Raritan near a small Indian village, probably Matochshaning (Metuchen). From there they went to Rock Hill and on to Stony Brook beyond the present site of Princeton. The Indian village on the path at this point was Wapowag, and some eight miles beyond they reached "The Falls" above Trenton.



Encased in glass, this ancient dugout is on view at Hackensack Public Library.

On their return they found some Indians in the village on Stony Brook at the point later known as Worth's Mills. They built a fire with great difficulty, slept in the open overnight and waded the swollen stream at considerable risk the next morning. The path allowed men and horses to walk in single file only. It was overgrown on both sides with bushes which wore out the breeches, stockings and shoes of the missionaries. Near Kingston they were welcomed by friendly Indians who gave them food and shelter.

On the following day the Indian chief at the camp took their sacks and carried them some 3½ miles to the wigwam of another chief who had a canoe with which they could cross the Millstone which was then in flood. The second chief ferried them across the river in safety though the water was very high. On their return trip the same Indian again ferried them across the Millstone in his canoe. This experience was typical of travel over Indian trails as late as 1749.

ANOTHER trail of major importance ran from Staten Island to Elizabethport and thence to Westfield, Somerville, Clinton, Pattenburg, Bloomsbury and Greenwich to Phillipsburg at the "Forks of the Delaware." It was over this path that David Brainerd, missionary to the Delawares, made his first trip to "The Forks" in the Spring of 1744. Many of the Indians traveled this route to attend the meeting for Treaty of Easton in 1758.

A path sometimes spoken of as the Minisink Trail went from "The Falls" at Trenton across Jersey in a southeasterly direction to Tuckerton. This route passed through Crosswicks, Brown's Mill, Mount Misery, by Bear Swamp Hill to the coast. The "Council of Crosswicks" with the Delaware Indians was held on this route at Crosswicks in the Winter of 1756.

About 2½ miles south of Tuckerton is located the Cedar Hammock. This shell heap is about a mile out on the tidewater marsh and was said by F. H. Cushing, the noted archeologist, to be the remains of a pile dwelling. It is about 100 feet long, 15 to 20 feet wide with a mean height of 12 feet. Six cedar trees centuries old crown its summit. It is the largest aboriginal shell heap along the Atlantic Coast. For many decades the Indians feasted on oysters and clams at that point.

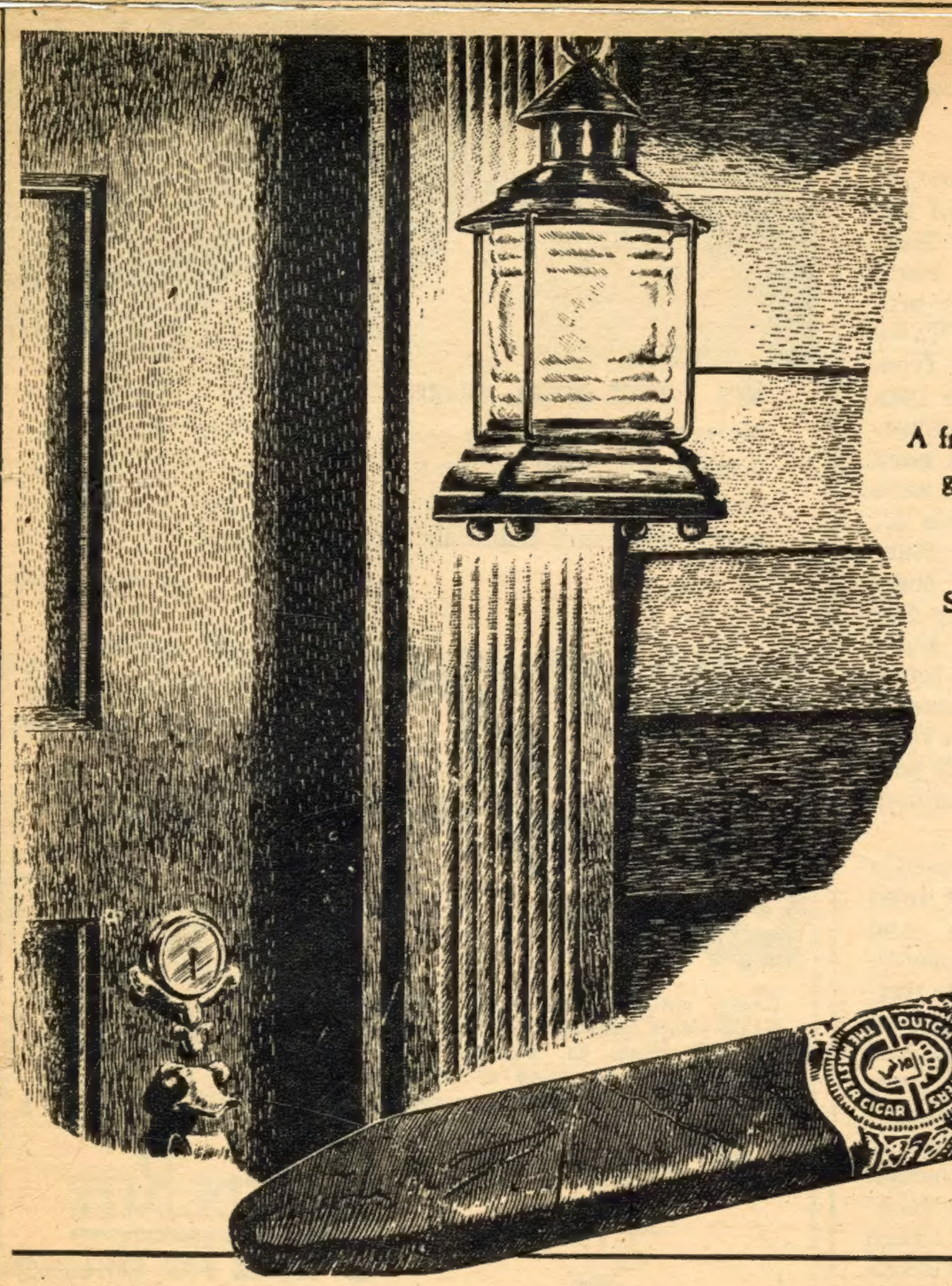
One other thoroughfare should receive particular attention. That is "The Great Minisink Trail." This was one of the most notable in the East since it was the outlet of the fur trade from the central Allegheny Mountains and westward. Backloads of pelts were carried down over this path to the Dutch traders at Branch Mills east of Westfield.

FROM the Munsee tribe village south of Minisink Island, the great trail passed through Culver's Gap. A path from the west joined this trail from across the river through Raymondskill Gap. Another path passed over the mountain by way of Stony Brook and came down north of Culver's Lake. Near Ross's Corner the path divided, one part went south of Lake Hopatcong through Newton and Netcong and the other north by way of Sparta and Woodport. This latter passed through Dover to Whippany and Hanover and thence through Millburn to Branch Mills.

The southern route went by way of Succasunna, Morristown, Chatham and over the hill by Turkey Road at Summit to Branch Mills. The two joined at Whitehead's Fort and proceeded by Ash Swamp (Tamaques) to Metuchen and Bonhamtown to the mouth of Red Rock Creek on the north shore of the Raritan some two miles above the present Victory Bridge. At the crossing on the south side of the Raritan was another great shell heap. The terminus was at Clay Pit Creek near Navesink in the Highlands.

This brief review of these routes will give the reader a cursory glance of travel in this early period. Wanderlust, the yen for hunting and fishing, the quest for food, trips to flint quarries and the challenge of adventure through the lure of river valleys and mountain passes, led to the fixing of routes by land and water. Evidence indicates considerable travel here over a long period of time.

NEXT WEEK: The Jersey Indians as Agriculturists.



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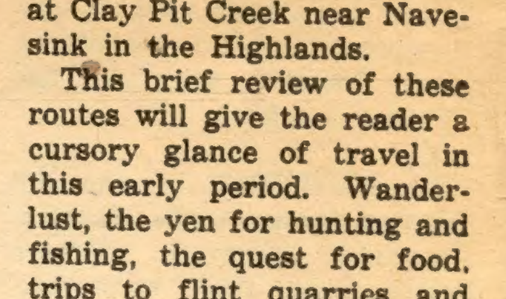

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